

Review of affordable Collections Database options

Our wish list and needs for the Anna Maria Island Historical Society:

- Free, or inexpensive
- Web-based, cloud storage solution, no server exists at the museum and only one computer, not tech support available
- Want an opportunity to involve the community in the capturing of data, sought systems that could add tags or comments
- Some metadata standardization possibilities, controlled vocabularies
- Easy or inexpensive to bulk upload an excel spreadsheet (that currently holds their collection information)
- Dublin core fields (to be in-line with the rest of the museum community on a base level)

Flickr

Free web-based solution to manage photographs that could be used to manage collection items online if there is a photo of every item.

Costs: The time to upload images and descriptions (might need to concatenate some fields in an excel spreadsheet to have richer data and searches), free 1,000GB of storage

Pros: Community involvement opportunities, outsiders could add content to images (memories, etc.) through comments and tags, easy to use, easy to access and share

Cons: Cant control metadata, would only be able to include descriptions, this to might need to be manually entered, would require an image for every item in the collection to use this method

Omeka

“Omeka is a free, flexible, and open source web-publishing platform for the display of library, museum, archives, and scholarly collections and exhibitions.” Open source metadata database, works on Linux, Apache, MySQL5, PHP5, (free). If the museum does not have a server, the museum can use Omeka.net to host the data. The system is built on the metadata standard Dublin Core. While it is document based, it could easily be applied to objects. Many of these fields are used in typical cataloging database with minor adjustments.

Costs: To import the data and images into Omeka.net, may need to work with a programmer to help. Yearly fee of \$49 a year for 1GB Storage

Pros: Established metadata standard, easy to use, easy for museums to use with no

training in database management. Web based version means you don't have to worry about software upgrades, they are automatic.

Cons: Not really suited for object management, no other object-based museum seems to be using this for collections management of objects, only used for catalogs, photographs and ephemera. No way to add tags and comments if interest in incorporating real language into the records. Their Dublin Core "type" controlled vocabulary does not include "physical object."

DSpace

Another open source software solution similar to what is outlined in OMEKA above. Requires a server, but they also have a web based version too. Often both these systems are preferred by archives and libraries.

Costs: enquired as to costs of web-based version

Pros: customizable, Dublin core metadata standard. USFSP is using the system and UF digital Collections.

Cons: Not really suited for object management, no other object-based museum seems to be using this, except for catalogs, photographs and ephemera.

Collective Access

CollectiveAccess is open-source collections management and presentation software designed for museums, archives, and special collections also increasingly used by libraries, corporations and non-profits. It is designed to handle large, heterogeneous collections that have complex cataloguing requirements and require support for a variety of metadata standards and media formats. Supports the following metadata standards: Dublin Core, PBCor and VRA Core. Requires a server to manage and some technology knowledge is necessary to setup and configure, but there are lots of online help available from other users.

Costs: Free, cost of a server

Pros: Customization possibilities, adding new fields that may be needed. Can use LOC subject headings and Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus, batch uploading capabilities, also can build user interface for the website with customization and further configurations. Smithsonian Channel, NY Public Library are some users

Cons: Need a server to run the data from, no option for web based server

Collections Space

Open-source, web-based software application for the description, management, and dissemination of museum collections information. Fairly robust system. Used and developed by

the Museum of the Moving Image. To set up, it requires some technology knowledge and familiarity

Costs: Free, but requires a server.

Pros: Robust system with lots of options suited towards collections management, can easily publish collection online (with some tech knowledge- OpenAPI)

Cons: lots of fields and layers of information. Requires a server. No web-based server options

Open Context

Open Context reviews, edits, and publishes archaeological research data and archives data with university-backed repositories, including the California Digital Library.

Strictly for archeological material. Must be submitted for inclusion.

CONTENTdm

CONTENTdm makes everything in your digital collections available to everyone, everywhere. No matter the format — local history archives, newspapers, books, maps, slide libraries or audio/video — CONTENTdm can handle the storage, management and delivery of your collections to users across the Web. A lot of academic museums and galleries use this for their collections. (If this is of interest, Greenstone should also be evaluated)

Cost: Depends on your collection, can be quite costly. It is part of OCLC.

Pros: It works with WorldCat and can potentially open a greater audience for the collection. Can store any type of file. OCR capabilities allowing images to be searchable. Easy to web publish (with tech knowledge- OpenAPI)

Cons: Costly

Vesica

Vesica is a web based museum collection management application (cloud) that can be used in lieu of traditional desktop software. Can be used by art, heritage, science and antique collections.

Costs: \$140 a month

Pros: Object based software, seems robust, web-based, design seems a little clunky

Cons: costly.

Azavea- Sajara

Web-based, catering to collections where geographic location is important. Web-based Geographic Digital Asset Management Software. See PhillyHistory.org for an example.

Cost: unavailable online.

Pros: e-Commerce Module, upload multiple file types including video, png, pdf, jpg, great for mobile applications

Cons: Requires a server, some GIS knowledge to use the mapping features.

* Cannot determine whether there are available metadata standards, or vocabularies

eHive

eHive is a collection management system on the web, very easy to use and to share collections online. They take care of backups and software and hardware upgrades to there is no need to worry about installing or upgrading anything—great for museums without tech support.

Costs: Basic use is free, once you begin adding lots and lots of images, over 50mb, there is a nominal cost for yearly hosting of data. A one-year license for over 4000 images, 1GB of space costs \$200

Pros: Simple layout, easy to use. Shared resources with other institutions, ability to add tags and comments.

Cons: No metadata standards, limited to jpg only files for attachment to the records, no pdfs or video file supported. No ability to customize the design or layout. There is limited reporting capabilities. Importing data is an additional cost (but very nominal, a few hundred dollars for 1500 records).

Luna Imaging, Inc.

Web-based alternative to traditional digital asset management systems. Originally developed for museums but now has a broader user base. They also offer scanning services. Supported on mobile devices, supports and displays multiple file formats- jpg, pdf, gif, MP3, has MARC record integration. Based on Solr and Lucene open source applications. Robust system with lots of options.

Costs: for hosted service starts at 3k a year, more if you have more than 5k records to manage

Pros: Required customization and knowledge of databases, bulk upload capabilities, import local authorities and controlled vocabularies

Cons: Costly, no metadata standards

PastPerfect

Desktop collections and contact management software, used by over 9500 museums

Cost: \$696 (with AASLH membership) additional \$228 to get it online (additional \$352 for annual hosting)

Pros: A lot of museums use this software, making it easy to share and standardize, ability to publish on the web

Cons: Still a little costly, requires a server, training, regular users. Support and upgrades required for long-term maintenance and management. If you purchase the basic edition, this does not include the ability to attach images, it requires an optional add one feature purchased separately. In order to get records imported (ex. An excel database) this would cost extra and has to be done by them.

Collectify

Desktop collections software, recently released the Collectify Cloud through Microsoft Remote Desktop (RDP), limited to one user at a time. Secure backup solution, still private collections information, no web publishing capabilities

Costs: \$149.95 for the Collectify Collectors' Edition, additional monthly costs between \$20 and \$50 for Collectify Cloud

Pros: Inexpensive, easy to use and import excel databases; Cloud backup solution (private cloud)

Cons: no online web publishing

Google Open Gallery

Online cloud based museum collections management tool. It is focused on creating high-resolution imagery for public use. Nice interface but requires good photography of collection. Anyone can participate (even individuals). Cataloging fields are basic; Dublin Core compatible and additional fields can be added. Great interface for online exhibitions, once your collections are added they can easily be created into an online exhibit.

Costs: Free initially, if you need more space that Google allows for free, you may have to purchase additional space, but it is a nominal costs

Pros: Great design, and its Google, seems to work with Dublin Core, Easily to import lots of data using CSV or XML file

Cons: Its Google and it will be evolving over time, this could cause problems in the future, they may not be consistency in the product as it evolves

Additional Resources

Great resources for learning more about other digital repositories with a product comparison table, some of the listed software companies are outlined in the above listings:

<http://www.rsp.ac.uk/start/software-survey/results-2010/>